



## The Physician's BOOKSHELF

**DR. THOMAS SYDENHAM (1624-1689), His Life and Original Writings**—By Kenneth Dewhurst. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966. 191 pages, \$6.00.

Thomas Sydenham (1624-1689) fully merited the appellation "the English Hippocrates," possessing in good measure, as Dr. John Brown wrote in his *Horae subsecivae*, the four qualities Hippocrates says are indispensable in every good physician—learning, sagacity, humanity, and probity. Sydenham's near contemporaries held him in the deepest reverence, and Herman Boerhaave (1668-1738) went so far as to remove his hat whenever he mentioned his name. In modern times, Sir William Osler placed Sydenham in his *Bibliotheca prima* of the seventeenth century among such giants as Bacon, Harvey, Galileo, and Newton, whereas the historian Fielding Garrison categorized Sydenham as one of the greatest figures in internal medicine. Despite such high praise, few physicians of today would be able to discuss the life or nature of the contribution of this major figure in medicine, save that his name is attached eponymously to Sydenham's chorea. Presumptively, this has been due to the fact that, except for a few brief essays, the only biographies are those of Joseph Payne in English, published in 1900, and of Louis Picard in French, presented as a thesis in 1889. The present work goes far towards remedying this gross deficiency.

The author divides this small book into two parts. The first part is a brief life—of little more than sixty pages—of this Puritan captain-of-horse turned physician, his family background, his relationship to colleagues, pupils, followers, and friends, with careful attention to the contemporary scene in the transition from the Civil War to the Restoration, and an analysis of Sydenham's contribution. The second part of some hundred pages presents a number of Sydenham's writings in their original dress, namely in English. As is well known, Sydenham's writings were for the most part translated into highly idiomatic Latin by his friends so that English editions of his works are in reality re-translations which conceal the vigor and robustness of his thought and style. The author traces the sources and history of these writings in an introductory essay of great value for their understanding.

Dr. Dewhurst has compressed a great deal of information, much from original sources, into this brief biography of Sydenham. His account is most satisfying and valuable. Nonetheless, it is not without some serious weaknesses. The author concludes (page 59) that the lasting value of Sydenham's writings lay in his ridding the *pharmacopeia* of many dangerous and obnoxious remedies, his pioneering of quinine, and his simplification of treatment and reliance on fresh air, exercise, and a moderate diet. Yet most would agree that Sydenham's greatest contribution lay in his concept of the categori-

zation of disease and establishment of the clinical entity. "All diseases then ought to be reduced to certain and determinate kinds . . .," he said. His revival of the objective and naturalistic spirit of Hippocrates was the outcome of his program of research which rested upon "collecting a genuine and natural description, or history, of all diseases." Further, there is no discussion of Sydenham's "Epidemic constitution" which became for him the central feature of the etiology of disease—a theory which forced him to discard ideas of contagion and the most regressive aspect of his progressive thinking. It is also surprising that the author relies on John Ward and later writers for authority on the Latin translators of Sydenham to the omission of the written statement by Dr. John Mapletoft's own son in a copy of the *Opera Universa*, given to Dr. John Latham by the grandson, and which later came into possession of the Brighton and Sussex Medico-Chirurgical Society Library. In this copy inscribed in Sydenham's own hand, the Reverend John Mapletoft (the doctor's son and John Ward's source) enumerates those books translated by his father and those by Gilbert Havers.

Despite the lack of a deeper critical analysis of Sydenham's contributions, this is a most worthy book. It is a joy to read and provides insight and perspective on the continuing problem of the widening gap between the science and art of medicine and the true meaning of clinical medicine. Every physician will want to own this small volume and to reflect upon the significance and meaning of Sydenham as the founder of modern clinical medicine.

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**ATLAS OF VASCULAR SURGERY**—Second Edition—By Falls B. Hershey, M.D., F.A.C.S., Associate Professor of Clinical Surgery, Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis; and Carl H. Calman, M.D., F.A.C.S., formerly Assistant in Clinical Surgery, Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis. The C. V. Mosby Company, 3207 Washington Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri 63103, 1967. 318 pages, \$19.50.

This is a second edition of an atlas which appeared in 1963. The material has been expanded to include recent developments in the general field of peripheral vascular surgery. There is still no mention of acute aortic dissections which have important peripheral manifestations, and certainly it would appear well within the intended scope of the book to present their surgical management. The illustrations are excellent and concise. Again the book affords good background material for residents and practicing surgeons, but it does not mean to be a comprehensive presentation of the field.

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